

Back-to-School Education Update

ATTRACTING QUALITY TEACHERS TO OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In our ongoing effort to improve our public schools and provide the best opportunity for our children to learn, we adopted legislation that will help us attract and retain the most qualified teachers to the classroom.

Among the bills we approved this session was Senate Bill 5695, a measure that creates statewide partnership grants to establish alternative certification programs for classified school employees and successful professionals



who want to enter the teaching profession. The bill will make it easier for qualified individuals to become certified to teach.

This will help alleviate the growing problem of teacher shortages in schools and enhance the learning experience for students by bringing to the classroom the expertise of qualified individuals who have successful real-world experience.

We also have increased the number of hours retired teachers can continue to work without a reduction in pension benefits. This will allow our schools to continue calling upon our most experienced teachers for part-time or substitute work.

Rep. Barry Sehlin
10th District

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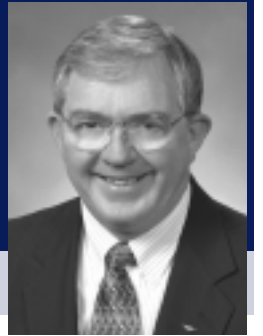
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10th District Back-to-School Education Update

Rep. Barry Sehlin



Sept. 2001

Dear friends,

As our children return to the classroom, many of us turn our attention to the state of our schools. So I thought this might be a good time to update you on some of the changes we've made in the Legislature to improve our schools and increase learning opportunities for students.

This year we enacted changes that will bring more qualified professionals to the classroom and provide incentives to keep some of our more experienced educators working with children.

Some significant changes in state funding were also approved, thanks in large part to the voters who passed two initiatives providing automatic teacher pay raises and dedicated funding for specific education enhancements.

Of course our true focus, whether it be budgeting or policy changes, is aimed at increasing student achievement. I hope this update gives you a better idea of some of the things lawmakers are working on to improve learning opportunities. As always, I welcome your calls and letters if you have questions about our schools or other legislative issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent our communities in the state Legislature. It is a tremendous honor.

Sincerely,

Barry Sehlin
State Representative

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ACCOUNTABILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

The next step toward educational excellence

Among the disappointments this past year was our inability to adopt policies for dealing with schools that fail to meet new accountability standards. We have set our sights high with new academic learning requirements and are using standardized tests to measure our effectiveness in improving student learning. Our next step is to set up a system of accountability that will allow us to assist parents and schools where test scores are not demonstrating improvement.



Rep. Sehlin is the Republican co-chair of the House Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for writing the state operating budget.

Education accountability will be a top priority for the Legislature during the 2002 session, which begins in January. It will require that we dismantle some of the bureaucratic barriers that prevent us from improving performance in our schools.

We want local educators to know that we are counting on them to help students achieve excellence, and we will take steps on behalf of parents to assist schools that fail to meet academic standards.

VOTER-APPROVED FUNDING MEASURES BOLSTER SCHOOL BUDGETS

We are now spending \$9.9 billion per biennium on K-12 education, which represents 43.5 percent of the entire state budget. Voters made a strong statement in favor of funding for schools by approving two education initiatives last November. The initiatives along with other enhancements resulted in an 8.7 percent increase in funding for education.

Initiative 732 guarantees annual cost-of-living pay increases for teachers based on the Seattle consumer price index – a very aggressive inflation indicator.

Initiative 728 provides additional revenue to school districts that may be used for:

- Reducing class size
- Providing extended learning opportunities in grades K-12, including extended school hours, tutoring programs, weekend school programs, and all-day kindergarten
- Providing additional professional development for educators
- Providing early assistance for children in need of pre-kindergarten support, and
- Providing improvements or additions to school building facilities

The cost of the two initiatives totals nearly \$800 million in the current budget and will increase to more than \$1 billion in additional funding for schools in the 2003-05 biennium.

I'm hopeful these and other funding enhancements provided in the state budget for our schools will achieve measurable improvement in student achievement. My only concern is that the overall spending level in the current budget is higher than we can sustain, and will eventually require cuts to existing programs or tax increases in the near future.

The amount of state funding provided per pupil has increased every year for the past six years, even after adjusting for inflation.

State Expenditures per Pupil Adjusted for Inflation

